

Father's Day Sermon

June 20, 2021

**God of unchangeable power
When you fashioned the world
The morning stars sang together
And the host of heaven shouted for joy;
Open our eyes to the wonder of creation
And teach us to use all things for good,
To the honor of your glorious name;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

The readings for today have many important messages for us; they also leave me hanging, with some uncertainty.

The Job selection is about the power of God that extends throughout the cosmos, not just in a human domain. It is wonderful poetry. I remember as a child in our backyard on Edgehill Road looking up at the marvelous pattern the trees made with their branches, Trips to the shore and the mountains, waves pine forests, snakes, bears, all wonders of my childhood. The wonder continued through college as a biology major wading in local streams, as a young man camping with my family, and now enjoying the fox and deer in the woods next to our apartment. You each have your own memories of nature, your discovery of God's wonderful and beautiful cosmos.

The message that we should behold in awe and wonder the power of God and God's created cosmos is central to this passage. As Francis of Assisi said If the creation is like this what must the creator be like?

However, the all too human attitude that God takes in the Job story diverts me from this message.

Job is an ancient story written with God having human characteristics so that it may help us to understand a being with divine characteristics. At the time (2500 years ago) Greek and Roman gods had both positive and negative human characteristics. So, the authors have God speaking as if, well He is a parent whose kids have just gotten on his last nerve. "Look at this house you live in; did you pay a dime for the mortgage? How about that car that drives you all over to appointments and lessons and school did you pay for that?" You get the idea. It is the argument humans make when they have power over another. Certainly, as popular in Job's time as it is now. It's

right because I said so. Beyond this story in real life, I feel God does His work differently, with more humility.

As Thomas Merton said:

“The Kings and dictators and the mighty of this world accomplish their work with speeches and drums and brass and the thunder of bombers. But God works in silence.” True but way harder to make into a story. So, trying to put this aside let us relish the main message of the power and diversity of our God of the Cosmos. Perhaps Be humble and have awe for all creation.

The psalm we just read echoes that range of wonder and diversity and of humans’ reaction to it.

In the New Testament reading from Mark, Jesus has had a long day of teaching parables to many people and he wants some time alone, which he figures he can get on a boat. Jesus (“as he is” it says in the reading) falls asleep in the boat. A scary storm forms around the boat and Jesus sleeps on. Fearing for their lives the frightened disciples wake him from his sound sleep. Now Jesus is human and I bet reacts like any of us when after a long day we are in a deep sleep and suddenly awakened; he is sleepy and probably grumpy. I bet you fathers and mothers have been in circumstances where you are awakened by your kids and are asked to do your best despite your being sleepy and grumpy.

What would Jesus do? Sleepy grumpy Jesus rises to the occasion, literally. He stands up and calms the sea and the storm. He demonstrates his power, not just over humans, but over the very Cosmos created by God. This is perhaps his most powerful miracle; if those writers of Job from centuries before Jesus witnessed this, they would have to do a rewrite or at least an addition to their story.

Now Jesus does have a temper. Those moneychangers in the temple could have told us that. But he doesn’t get angry with his friends in the boat, he just offers one bit of advice:

Do not be afraid but have faith.

I also am acquainted with fear; as a 16-year-old when my Dad died, as a father when my daughter who on her way to first grade was hit by a truck, of the seemingly innumerable suffering fearful kids and parents whom I interacted with in my job. I asked for Jesus, I wanted him to appear, I wanted him to wake. You each have your own experiences with fear, your prayers to Jesus for intervention in your lives. At one point or another we

may all be in a position where sudden strong storms of life appear around our little boats.

Do not be afraid but have faith.

So the lessons are: We should behold in awe the beautiful diversity of God's created cosmos, and we should have faith and not be afraid.

I have to tell you I am still a little stuck with so what do I do now?

These two powerful messages are branches of the tree of our faith. Let's take a look at the trunk of that tree to see if we can tie them together. Psst... the trunk is Love.

Religion professor Ilia Deleo writes " We are not little creatures who live down below in the valley of the earth. We are created lovers of God and even though we are finite and incomplete in our loving relationship with God, we are caught up in the eternal love of the Father and the son."

She continues, "I know you will ask, if we are so caught up in this eternal love affair with the Trinity, why is it that we suffer in this world, that people die and things change. The answer is not simple but it is related to the fact that we are finite beings and radically dependent on God. Being finite, we are subject to change because what is finite does not last forever. Only love endures.

So, if you really want to know how you and I and the world fit into this drama you must pray, says Delio.

I (Rick Pearce) say that any relationship is based on communication and that prayer, both individual and as a group is our communication with God, our struggle to establish and maintain our relationship with God. That is why Delio speaks of prayer as a way to figure this stuff out.

Finally, Delio writes "' Only a relationship of love with God can lead you into the heart of God. There you will discover a little of the great mystery that is your life. Psalm 34 says, "Everyone separated from love is empty and hungry within, but those who open their hearts to the Beloved are filled to overflowing."

The mystery of God, at times, seems so lofty and beyond our ability to understand it, yet it really lies within the human heart because the human heart dwells in and reflects the heart of God.'

Back to far less articulate me: we are called to be lovers of God and God's creation, which by the way includes each other. This ties together, for me,

why we should have faith and are not afraid and why we behold the beautiful diversity of God's Cosmos with awe and love.

I think we are called to be humble but not as whimpering servants. We are called to be humble as God is humble, working in the background of our existence with faithfulness love and caring.

We take God's love in stride like most kids get used to a parent's love and after a while just expect it, like sunshine. A parent is then tempted at times to remind their kids that that love is given to them. But remembered or forgotten love is still there. Rejoice in your creation and the creation of those who you love, knowing God has an unique individual love for each of you as unique beings in His cosmos. Rejoice in the presence of Jesus who is present with you in your suffering.

Please go out into creation, stand in awe and realize that behind all of this amazing universe that surrounds us we are also surrounded by love, and are active agents of that love. The natural world will help you realize this, I believe.

In closing, lyrics from a song by David Wilcox about this situation:

**It is love who mixed the mortar
And its love who stacked these stones
And it is love that made this stage here though it looks like we're alone
In this scene set in shadows
Like the night is here to stay
There is evil cast around us
But its love that wrote the play
In this darkness
Love can show the way.**

Amen

